Illegal sex determination

*209. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that large scale illegal sex determination in the country is leading female foeticide resulting in a serious imbalance in the male-female sex ratio brought out by the Census 2001;

(b) if so, the response of Government thereto and the corrective steps taken/proposed to be taken in this regard; and

(c) the action taken or proposed to be taken against clinics which are using ultrasound machines without licence?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C. P. THAKUR): (a) to (c) The Census 2001 has revealed that sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 years has declined from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001. Several reasons are adduced for the same. Some of the reasons are:

- Son preference
- Neglect of the girl child resulting in their higher mortality at younger age
- Higher maternal mortality
- Female infanticide
- Female foeticide
- Male bias in enumeration of population.

With a view to containing the menace of female foeticide, Government has brought into force the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 (PNDT Act) with effect from 1.1.1996. The implementation of the provisions of the Act rests with the States/UTs. As the implementation of the Act was not satisfactory in various States/UTs, in a Public Interest Litigation filed by the Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT) & others, the Supreme Court of India has issued directions to both Central and State Governments for more effective implementation of the Act. The directions of the Supreme Court, *inter-alia*, include generation of awareness about the provisions of the

Act both at national, State and district levels, implementation of the Act with full vigour and zeal to ensure registration of all clinics using ultrasound machines so as to keep an eye on them lest they should undertake sex determination of foetus of pregnant woman, obtaining of information relating to users of such machines from their manufacturers, importers, suppliers, dealers, persons having their maintenance contracts and others, sealing and seizure of the machines of those who have not got themselves registered under the Act, to restrict sale of such machines to registered clinics, to amend the Act keeping in mind the emerging technologies and difficulties encountered in implementation of the Act and take all other such measures as may be necessary for effective implementation of the Act.

The Central Government have requested all the State Governments/UTs to implement the provisions of the Act and comply with the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India with full vigour and zeal. Appropriate Authorities and Advisory Committees have been appointed under the Act in all the States/UTs. These have been appointed at district and at some places at sub-district levels in most of the States/UTs. They are taking action to generate awareness about the provisions of the Act in public and among law enforcing agencies, service providers, medical and para-medical personnel by hoardings, wall paintings, news papers, All India Radio, TV and other means of publicity. The Central Government has constituted a Central Supervisory Board under the chairmanship of Minister of Health and Family Welfare. Quarterly returns about the implementation of the Act and compliance with the directions of the Supreme Court of India are obtained from State Governments/UTs and reviewed by the Central Suprervisory Board (CSB).

A list of over 11,000 buyers of ultrasound machines received from the manufacturers, importers, suppliers, dealers, service providers etc. of such machines has been forwarded to the States/UTs for ensuring registration of the persons/bodies mentioned in the list including sealing and seizure of the machines of unregistered clinics. They have so far filed 103 complaints against the violators of the provisions of the Act and have sealed/seized machines of 22 clinics.